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Peabody Education Fund.

TRIBUTE

TO

GOVERNOR AIKEN.

TRIBUTE

TO

WILLIAM AIKEN,

EX-GOVERNOR OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TRUSTEES

OF THE

PEABODY EDUCATION FUND,

NEW YORK, 5 OCTOBER, 1887.

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TRIBUTE.

At the Annual Meeting of the Peabody Trustees of Southern Education, at New York, on the 5th of October, 1887, the Chairman, Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, at the conclusion of his Introductory Address, announced the death of Governor Aiken as follows: —

I have reserved, Gentlemen, for the closing words of this Address the formal announcement of what has been uppermost, I am sure, in all our minds and in all our hearts, as it certainly has been in my own, in coming to our Annual Meeting this morning. I need not say that I refer to the death of our highly valued and endeared associate and friend, Governor Aiken of South Carolina.

As one of the very few surviving members of this Board originally named by Mr. Peabody himself twenty years ago; as one of the Executive Committee for nearly that whole period, and for several years its Chairman; as our second Vice-President since the death of good Bishop McIlvaine; and as the leading representative always of the States for the benefit of whose children our Trust was

established, — Governor Aiken has been connected with our Board and its work, and with most of us individually, by ties which cannot be severed without our deep sorrow. He has been a faithful and devoted member of our Board from first to last, rarely missing a meeting, and always co-operating cordially with us in all our proceedings. I hold in my hand the last letter which I received from him, which I cannot forbear from reading to you. I had written to tell him of the death of Dr. Stearns, of the perplexity in which we were placed, and of the seeming necessity of an extra meeting of the Trustees in July. His reply was as follows: —

CHARLESTON, S. C., June 15, 1887.

DEAR MR. WINTHROP, — Your note received. I greatly regret it will not be in my power to attend your proposed meeting of the Trustees on the 7th of July.

My health has been severely shattered during the last seven or eight months, — so much so that I have not the strength to undertake so long a journey.

It appears to me that Dr. Green and yourself could manage the matter without the Board being called together. Anything you may do will certainly be sanctioned at the meeting in October.

Yours sincerely and truly,

WILLIAM AIKEN.

Our lamented friend had held many offices of importance and distinction in his own State and in the Nation. For several years a representative, and afterwards a senator, in the legislature of South Carolina, he was the Governor of that State in 1844, and was a Representative in Congress from 1851 to 1857. In the organization of the House of Representatives of the United States in 1855–56, after a memorable contest, he came within a vote or two of being elected Speaker of that body, and could

not fail to have been disappointed; but he gave his hand instantly and cheerfully to the successful candidate, and conducted him to the chair. He was one of the most amiable of men; distinguished, among Southern and Northern statesmen alike, for moderation, good temper, and good sense.

The results of the Civil War, in which he had taken no active part, fell heavily upon him, depriving him of a large part of a great fortune, and leaving him with but a small fraction for the support of those dearest to him. But he bore his pecuniary reverses, and not a few most trying personal injustices, with cheerful resignation, and was ready to unite at once in any measures for the pacification, conciliation, and welfare of the Southern people, and for the restoration of peace, harmony, and union to our country. To this Peabody Trust he looked with affectionate confidence, as one of the earliest and most effective means of healing the wounds which the war had inflicted upon the social relations of the North and South, as well as of providing education for the Southern children; and he often said that he regarded the position of one of Mr. Peabody's Trustees as a higher honor than any office which he had ever held or sought.

Governor Aiken was born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1806, and died on the 6th of September last. He had thus reached the ample age of eighty-one years. He married a niece of the eminent and excellent William Lowndes, whose fame was second to that of no one of his contemporaries in the Congress of the United States more than half a century ago. We shall all desire to offer our heartfelt sympathies to his venerable widow and to his family, and to enter upon our records an affectionate tribute to his own services and character.

In thinking how this might best be done, I could not fail to recall the warm friendship which had long existed

between our lamented associate and our honored Vice-President, Governor Fish, and I wrote to the Governor to beg him to prepare a Minute for our Records. On my arrival here yesterday, I received a note from him, which I will read, together with his admirable tribute to Governor Aiken, and leave them for the disposition of the Board.

Resolved, That the following entry be made in the Minutes of this Board: —

The Trustees of the Peabody Education Fund have listened with profound regret to the sad notice in their President's Address of the death of their much-beloved associate, the late William Aiken.

Named by Mr. Peabody as one of the Trustees on the original foundation of the Trust, Governor Aiken's interest in its objects has from the beginning been zealous and efficient. The history of the Trust records his untiring devotion to its aims; no one was in advance of him in the advocacy of its high purposes, and no one was ready to give more of personal attention, or to sacrifice more of personal convenience, in their advancement.

Tender and warm in his affections, kind and genial in his intercourse, scrupulous in truthfulness and integrity, free from vanity or pretension, generous in his judgments as in his life, he was beloved because the kind gentleness of his intercourse was an inseparable part of his nature, and because the happiness of others was with him an object of life, and formed a large part of his own happiness. The pleasure of others was his enjoyment.

Governor Aiken's was a moral and highly religious character: exemplary and beautiful in the varied walks of life, a devoted husband, a kind and affectionate father, a loyal and generous friend. Called to many high positions in public life, he fulfilled all their trusts with dignity, integrity,

and ability; and when the disasters of a civil war surrounded him, its attendants — adversity, misfortune, and loss of property — diminished neither his calm cheerfulness, his hospitality, nor his warmth of heart.

His associates in this Board, who well know his virtues and his high qualities, deeply deplore his loss, and record this feeble but sincere tribute to the worth of a dear friend.

Whereupon, on motion of Chief-Justice Waite, seconded by Hon. Henry R. Jackson, it was unanimously

Voted, That the foregoing Minute be entered on our Records, and that a copy be communicated to the widow and family of Governor Aiken, with an assurance of the heartfelt sympathy of the Trustees.

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